

MY PERSONAL SAFETY PROGRAM

Name: _____ Date: _____

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and the safety of my children and pets. Although I do not have control over my partner, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her or how to best get my children and myself to safety.

STEP 1: SAFETY DURING VIOLENCE

Victims cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, victims should consider some or all of these strategies and remember this is not a comprehensive list.

- a. If I have a support person that my partner is not aware of, keep that person's name and address confidential.
- b. If I decide to leave, I will _____. (Practice how to get out safely – what doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes will you use?)
- c. Ensure that some form of emergency transportation is available on request. This may be through a friend or through community supports.
- d. I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call the Police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house or if they cannot locate me. (list 2 trusted friends/ neighbors and their phone numbers)
- e. I will use _____ as my code word with my children and friends so they can go for help.
- f. I can teach some of these strategies to my children.
- g. When I expect my partner and I are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. I will not run to my children, the abuser may hurt them. (Remember to avoid the bathroom, kitchen, garage, rooms containing weapons and rooms with no access to the outside.)
- h. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I should consider doing what I know will calm my partner down. I must remember that I have to protect myself and my children until we are out of danger.
- i. My children should be told that violence is not okay, even when the abuser is someone that they love. I will tell my children that the targets of violence are not at fault. Neither my children nor I are the cause of the violence. The most important thing is for my children to be protected and to protect themselves.

STEP 2: SAFETY IN MY OWN RESIDENCE

There are many things that I can do to increase safety in my own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step. Safety measures I can consider include:

- a. If possible, I will pre-program emergency numbers into your land-line phone (i.e. 911). 911 cannot locate a caller on a cell phone – be prepared to provide an address
- b. If possible I will keep a phone in a room I can lock from the inside. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the Police and to provide quick and accurate information including directions to our home and neighborhood.
- c. I will try to put away a little money at every opportunity, even enough for a phone call. If possible, I will hide an extra key to a vehicle. I can keep my purse/wallet, identification, passports, car keys, and emergency cash ready and put them in (place) _____ in order to leave quickly.
- d. I will avoid staying alone.
- e. I will plan how to get away if confronted by the abusive partner
- f. If I have to meet my partner, I will do it in a public place.
- g. I will vary my routine.
- h. If possible I will change the locks on the doors and windows as soon as possible.
- i. If possible I will replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- j. If possible I will change phone number and/or screen all calls.
- k. If possible I will install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system with 'panic button', etc.
- l. If possible I will purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- m. If possible I will install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in the house/apartment.
- n. If possible I will install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my home.
- o. I will deactivate the garage door opener at night or when I am at home, and I will remove the remote from my vehicle. I will keep the entry to the house closed and locked.
- p. I will teach me children how to use a phone, including how to call long distance, how to get help from the operator, and how to talk on answering machines. I will teach them our phone number and a safe number to call for assistance.

- q. I will teach my children a code word that grants them permission to leave with a person other than myself only when that person uses that code word in direct communication with my children.
- r. I will remember to give my code word to the person(s) I instruct to collect my children in an emergency or any other unusual situation AND I will change the code word with my children frequently.
- s. I will tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:

	(school)
	(day-care staff)
	(baby-sitter)
	(Sunday school teacher)
	(teacher)
	(coach/instructor)
	(others)
- t. I can inform my neighbor, religious leader and _____ that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he is observed near my residence.

STEP 3: SAFETY PLANNING FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN AN ABUSIVE SITUATION

The most important thing a child can do when there is a violent situation is to get away from the area of violence. Children cannot stop the abuse, although they often try by distracting the abuser or directly interfering in the abusive episode. Tell your children that the best and most important thing for them to do is to keep themselves safe.

When the family is still together:

- a. Have the children identify a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door and a phone. Teach your child that the first step is to get out of the room where the abuse is occurring.
- b. Stress the importance of being safe, and that it is not your child's responsibility to make sure their parent is safe.
- c. Teach your children how to call for help. It is important that children know they should not use a phone that is in view of the abuser.
- d. Teach your children how to contact the police at the emergency number.
- e. Make sure your children know their full name and address.
- f. Rehearse what your children will say. In the case of a young child, it should be simple yet specific (e.g. 'Someone is hurting my mommy')

- g. It is important that children leave the phone off the hook after they are done talking. The police will call the number back if they hang up. This could create a dangerous situation for the child and yourself.
- h. Pick a safe place (out of the home) to meet your children so you can easily find each other) after the situation is safe for you and them.
- i. Teach your children the safest route to the planned place of safety for them.

It is important that if you leave your home that your children go with you, or you get them as soon after as possible. Historically, when matters go to court, the parent who has the children is more likely to keep the children.

STEP 4: SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE

The abused may wonder whether to tell their partner they are leaving. In cases where there has been physical abuse or extremely controlling behavior, telling the abuser can seriously endanger the abused. Many abusers become increasingly violent when they fear their partner is leaving and they are losing control over them. Many victims are killed as they attempt to leave the abusive partner. Victims can use some or all of these strategies to help make their departure safer:

- a. If I leave my home, I will go to _____. If I cannot go to the above location, then I can go to _____. (Decide this even if you don't think there will be another violent incident.) Have a list of shelters and phone numbers accessible, but hidden. If you are ready to leave keep checking to see if there is space for you and your children. If you have special needs be sure to let them know.
- b. Whenever calling a shelter or other resources, be sure to press several numbers randomly immediately afterwards so that your partner cannot press the redial button and find out who you have been speaking to.
- c. Make plans for any pets that you have that you are unable to take and that you cannot leave behind. If you have no place to leave your pets and this will prevent you from leaving, mention this to the shelter when you call.
- d. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.
- e. I will keep copies of important documents at _____.
- f. I will open a savings account by (date) _____ in order to increase my independence.
- g. Other things I can do to increase my independence are: _____

- h. To make emergency phone calls and to keep them private, I can keep change or a **prepaid** phone card with me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the next month's bill will reveal the numbers I have called recently, including those

I made after I left. If I need a new telephone credit card immediately, I could borrow one from a friend for a limited time when I first leave. I will check with the phone service to make sure that the last number I have called cannot be accessed by my partner.

- i. I will contact _____ and _____ for a temporary place to stay and for emergency financial assistance.
- j. I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- k. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ (week? 2 weeks? month?) in order to plan the safest way to leave my residence. My case worker or friend has agreed to help me review this plan.
- l. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice with my children.
- m. I will consider renting a post office box for my mail or using the address of a friend.

STEP 5: ITEMS TO TAKE WITH ME WHEN LEAVING

When I leave my partner, it is important to take certain items with me. Beyond this, I will give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend, just in case I have to leave quickly. Items with asterisks on the following list are the most important to take, but are not in order of priority. If there is time, the other items might be taken or stored outside the home. Items to take when leaving should be placed ahead of time in one location so that they can be grabbed quickly if I have to leave quickly. Items to take are:

My identification (birth certificate, driver's license, passport, etc) *	Children's birth certificates *
Social Insurance cards *	My Partner's Social Insurance Number *
My health card *	My children's health cards *
School and vaccination records *	Money *
Cheque book, ATM card *	Credit cards *
Bank books *	Keys – house, car, office *
Medications/prescriptions *	Custody orders *
Welfare / Mother's Allowance identification *	Work permits *
Lease/rental agreements, property deed(s) *	Mortgage payment documents *
Immigration Papers *	Passports *

Divorce documentation *	Medical records for all family members *
Children's favorite toys and/or blankets *	Vehicle ownership documents *
Senior's card *	First Nations Status Card / documentation *
Employment / pension documentation *	Photographs
Jewelry	Insurance papers
Address book	Items of special sentimental value

TELEPHONE NUMBERS I NEED TO KNOW

Police, Fire, Ambulance: 911, or _____

Victims Services: _____

Women's Shelter: _____

Distress Centre: _____

Family Services: _____

Kid's Help Phone: _____

Doctor: Name: _____ Phone: _____

Religious Leader: Name _____ Phone: _____

Lawyer: Name: _____ Phone: _____

Work: _____

Work Supervisor's Home: Name: _____ Phone: _____

Children's School: _____

Children's Daycare: _____

Social Worker: Name: _____ Phone: _____

Others: _____

Contact Police Officer: Name: _____ Phone: _____

STEP 6: SAFETY WITH A COURT ORDER

Some abusers obey court orders such as peace bonds or restraining orders, where they promise the court that they will abide by all terms and conditions of such an order. Unfortunately, one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate a court order. Here are some steps that a person can take to help enforce their partner's court order.

- a. It is important that to report to the police when my partner breaches any conditions of the court order. I understand that there may be further charges if I contact him when there is a no contact order in place
- b. I will get a copy of my partner's court order from the court office located at _____ and keep it with me at all times. (If you change purses that is the first thing to go in.)
- c. It is very important to remember that if your court order changes for any reason you should give a copy to the police. They cannot protect you if your order is changed and they do not have a current copy.
- d. If my partner destroys my copy of the court order, I can get another copy from the court or from the police.
- e. If I relocate to another city/town, or if I work in a city/town other than where I reside, I will notify the police and/or victim services in that city/town of my new address/work location AND of my partner's violent behavior and the details of his court order.
- f. For further safety, if I often visit other cities/towns/countries, I will notify the police service in the jurisdiction I am visiting, of my partner's violent behavior and the details of the court order.
- g. I will inform my employer, my children's' school/daycare provider, my religious leader, my outreach worker and _____ that a court order has been issued against my partner, including all of the conditions that affect me and my children.

STEP 7: SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC

I must decide if and when I will tell others that my partner can become violent and that I may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect me. I should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure my safety. I can do some or all of the following:

- a. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____ (secretary, co-worker) at work of my situation.
- b. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work. I can also make use of telephone voice messaging to screen my calls.
- c. When leaving work, I can walk from the building with _____ (security guard, co-worker, friend) to ensure my safety.

- d. If problems occur while I am driving I can _____ (use my cell phone, in-car phone, personal sound alarm, honk my horn continuously, drive directly to a well-lit public place that is open and heavily populated, drive directly to the local police service for assistance).
- e. If I use public transit, I can _____ (sit close to the front by the driver, arrange for someone to meet me at my bust stop and walk me home, once I arrive home, I can call a friend or relative to let them know I arrived safely).
- f. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours different from those I used when living with my partner.
- g. I can also _____
_____.

STEP 8: SAFETY AND DRUG OR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Many people in our culture consume alcohol. Many consume mood-altering drugs. Some of this consumption is legal and some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on me, may hurt relationships with the my children, and put me at a disadvantage in other legal actions with my abusive partner. Therefore, I should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. But beyond this, the use of any alcohol and other drugs can reduce my awareness and ability to act quickly to protect both me and my children from the abuser. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the abuser may give the abuser an excuse to use violence. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol consumption, I need to make specific plans. They may include some or all of the following:

- a. If I am going to consume, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.
- b. I can also call a friend, call alcoholics anonymous sponsor, etc.
- c. If my partner is consuming, I can leave with the children, call a friend, call a friend of my partner.
- d. To safeguard my children, I can remove them from the scene where my partner is consuming.

STEP 9: SAFETY AND MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The experience of being abused and/or verbally degraded by my partner can be exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself will take much courage and incredible energy. Here are some things I can do to conserve emotional energy and resources, and to avoid hard emotional times.

- a. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can call a friend, relative or shelter worker for support or _____.
- b. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can advise him I am recording what he is telling me and then I will do so, I will arrange to have a

trusted friend or close adult relative present during these meetings/communications, or make arrangements for all communication to go through a lawyer or another unbiased third party, or _____.

- c. I can use 'I can.....' statements with myself and be assertive with others.
- d. I can tell myself 'I'm in charge of my life and confident in my decision-making abilities or _____' (other positive statements about my abilities) when I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- e. I can read my spiritual teachings, poetry, self-help resources or _____ to help me feel stronger.
- f. I can call _____ (names of friends, family and other support people) to be of support to me.
- g. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are _____,
- h. I can attend workshops and support groups offered through the church, community resource centre, women's shelters, women's resource centre or Health Unit located at _____ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

STEP 10: CHILDREN SAFETY IN CUSTODY AND ACCESS SITUATIONS

Children who have witnessed abuse in their families may be quite fearful or anxious about visits. Planning for visits – supervised or unsupervised can help children not only manage fear or anxiety, but can help them develop safety skills and realistic safety plans to minimize the risk of violence during the visit.

Information: Children need to know information that pertains to them. They also need to know that sometimes the other parent may try to get information from them.

Safety: If at all possible, use a third party to arrange access visits. If that is not possible, try to have a third party with you when you have to exchange children.

Phoning Home: Children need to know how to use a phone, which includes learning how to call long distance, how to get help from the operator, and talking on answering machines. They need to know their phone number and a safe number to call for assistance.

Emergency Assistance: Children need to be taught how to get emergency assistance – 911. Remember that a 911 operator cannot locate you or your children from a cell phone unless an address is provided.

Escape Plan: Make a plan with your children about how they can get out of a situation. This may include using codes, teaching how to use the telephone, who they can talk to, etc.

STEP 11: COURT

Going to court can be a stressful situation at the best of times. When you are going to face the abuser either for criminal matters or civil family matters it is important to ensure that you have a plan for safety.

If you are going to criminal court make sure:

- a. You can get support from Airdrie Victims Assistance. This support includes preparation for court as well as having someone in court with you. The Airdrie Victims Assistance telephone number is (403) 945-7290.
- b. Take a support person with you
- c. Talk to your lawyer / crown / police about your safety concerns.
- d. Make sure you know why you are at court, what your role is, and what you are expected to do. Victims Assistance will help you with this.
- e. The courthouse has security – you can ask security staff to accompany you to the courtroom or out to your car if necessary.
- f. Do not provoke any situations.
- g. Do not talk to your abuser.
- h. Know how you will avoid or get away from the abuser. You can request a visit to the courthouse before your court date so you are familiar with its layout.

Appendix 5

CHILDREN'S SAFETY PLAN

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

My Mom's Name: _____

My Dad's Name: _____

Brothers/Sisters: _____

If I feel unsafe or think my mom is unsafe, I can:

Hide somewhere in my house. Places I can hide are:

Leave the house. Places I can go are:

I can call 911. Here is how I would ask for help:

Dial 911

An operator will say "**Police, Fire, Ambulance**'

I will say "**Police**"

Then I will say "**My name is** _____."

I am _____ **years old.**

I need help. Send Police. Someone is hurting my mom.

The address here is _____

The phone number is _____.

Do not hang up.

I can go to a neighbor's house. I could go to:

I can call someone that I trust. Someone I could call would be:
